

Bellhorn Making Mark with Knights

By Ryan Anderson
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It is the scenario of many Hollywood movies; a local high school standout athlete attends the hometown college and helps bring the championship to the town.

In many regards, Todd Bellhorn, pitcher and designated hitter for the Golden Knights baseball team is living that Hollywood screenplay after graduating from Oviedo High School and playing for UCF just a few miles down the road from his high school.

While few would argue Bellhorn's aestheticism helped him make the jump from local high school player to local college player, he wastes no time crediting the source of his success on the diamond.

"First of all, I would like to thank the Lord for giving me the ability to play baseball because, without him, I know that I wouldn't be here," Bellhorn said. "My relationship with Christ has really been a big influence on me."

In addition to being on the baseball team, Bellhorn is also active in the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

Bellhorn's love for baseball began with T-ball and although he played other sports throughout middle school and high school, baseball was always his first love when it came to sports.

"I played other sports but somehow baseball just felt like the right sport to play, especially at the college level," Bellhorn said.

So once Bellhorn decided on a sport to play in college the next logical step was to find a college where he could play baseball. He didn't need to look to far beyond his own backyard to find it.

"Since I live in Oviedo, I used to come out and watch the UCF games while I was in high school, so I knew how the system worked," Bellhorn said. "Even though I knew UCF wasn't a big-time athletic program, I knew the baseball team was really strong and that they played some really good competition. I also knew that if I went to UCF I would have more of an opportunity to play than if I had gone to a big college. I was kind of anxious to get out there and play instead of being redshirted for a year or two like I might have been if I went to a larger school."

Indeed, Bellhorn did get an opportunity to play for UCF from day one. The team advanced to the NCAA Regionals his freshmen year and had a 29-game winning streak during the regular season.

"It was just amazing to me how many people came out and supported us during the streak," Bellhorn said. "You know you really on the college level when you go to Florida State with five

other teams that are just really well known. Stepping into that spotlight just made me feel like I was there at the college level.”

Besides being able to play right away, going to UCF helped Bellhorn in other ways as well.

“I was definitely able to get into a comfort zone more quickly, by coming to UCF since I know the area and the facilities,” Bellhorn said.

One of the greatest influences on Bellhorn’s life is his parents. His playing so close to home allows an opportunity for them to watch their influence in action.

“My parents have backed me in any decision that I have had to make. They have always been right there at my side including coming to all of my games regardless of what they have to go to get there,” Bellhorn said. “They have been a great influence on my life. They have really taught me a lot.”

In the era of players motivated by records and statistics, Bellhorn’s motivation to play sounds a little like something from another era of baseball.

“I guess my greatest motivation on the field would be the competitiveness that is in everybody,” Bellhorn said. “Sometimes, in baseball it is hard to get motivated day in and day out. It is such a mental struggle sometimes. But then you need to look on the bright side. We are blessed to have the ability just to play, especially on the college level. When I think about the fact that some people can’t even pick up a baseball, it doesn't really matter if I'm in a slump or playing bad. That just motivates me to be happy with what I've got.”

As for Bellhorn’s post UCF plans, he would like to play professional baseball if the opportunity presents itself or continuing his education by going on to graduate school. But for now, he is just concentrating on the season at hand.

Although the Golden Knights season could be easily described as a roller coaster, Bellhorn is taking it all in stride with a little advice from his coach.

“Coach Bergman always says that you can’t let your peaks get too high or your valleys too low,” Bellhorn said. “That’s something I have tried to keep in perspective. If you are playing really badly you can’t let it get to you. You just have to deal with what happens, that’s sports. You are not always going to win them.”